



Testimony of Anne Hulick, State Director, Clean Water Action
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee
February 10, 2021

Testimony in support of ***Raised S.B. 837 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF PERFLUOROALKYL OR POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES IN CLASS B FIREFIGHTING FOAM***

Dear Senator Cohen, Representative Borer, Ranking Members Senator Miner, Representative Harding and distinguished members of the Environment Committee,

Clean Water Action is a national, environmental advocacy organization focusing on protecting water and preventing pollution. We are extremely concerned about the health and environmental impacts from toxic chemicals, including per and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). We support ***Raised S.B. 837 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF PERFLUOROALKYL OR POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES IN CLASS B FIREFIGHTING FOAM*** with recommendations.

PFAS chemicals, a class of approximately 9000 varying chemical compounds, have at least one fluorine-carbon bond which is the strongest chemical bond known to man. This quality makes them effective in numerous products as the “forever” chemical bonds are resistant to water, grease, stains and even petroleum-based fires. Firefighting foam, known as aqueous film-forming foam or AFFF, is effective at suppressing fuel-based fires. Unfortunately, these “forever chemicals” don’t break down, expose firefighters and first responders, get into the environment and are highly toxic. They are strongly linked to testicular and kidney cancers, liver damage, thyroid disruption, low birth weights, ulcerative colitis and impaired immunity.

When AFFF is deployed either for training or on a real fire, thousands of gallons can get into the environment. Tragically, we experienced this in June 2019, when approximately 40,000 gallons of AFFF leaked from a private hangar and into the Farmington River, causing extensive contamination, economic harm and exposed many residents who live along the river.

AFFF has been the defacto standard as it has been required at all military bases and certain size commercial airports, due to an outdated military specification. Safe, effective fluorine-free foams are available and used throughout the world at major international airports. In the absence of federal action, states are taking action to restrict the use of this foam unless it is required by federal law.

We strongly recommend that Raised S.B. 837 be passed but recommend that its use for training be banned immediately. We are aware that DEEP and Connecticut’s fire administrator are already moving in this direction. We also support and appreciate DEEP’s leadership in

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implementing a take-back program. This not only assures safe handling and decontamination of containers in local fire departments but also shifts the cost of managing the AFFF onto the state rather than local departments that don't have the resources or financial means to manage this. We encourage DEEP to continue to expedite the take back program as quickly and safely as possible.

Lastly, we strongly support a full ban of AFFF, unless required by federal law, by 2022. There is no reason to delay. Fluorine free foams exist and are known to be effective. A timely and full ban is consistent with other states, will reduce exposure to firefighters and first responders and significantly reduce toxic chemical contamination of our environment.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anne B. Hulick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne Hulick, JD, MS, RN

Connecticut Director, Clean Water Action